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Canada's New Government Launches National Web-Based Consultations on *Advantage Canada* Economic Plan

The Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, today launched an online consultation process on the Department's website to give Canadians an opportunity to provide their views to the Government on its new long-term economic plan, *Advantage Canada*.

"Canada's New Government is actively seeking input and ideas regarding the most effective and efficient ways to implement the details of this plan," said Minister Flaherty. "*Advantage Canada* is a bold new long-term plan that will create the right conditions and opportunities for families and businesses to succeed."

Advantage Canada builds on Canada's strengths and seeks to gain a global competitive advantage in five key areas:

- Tax Advantage—Reducing taxes for all Canadians and establishing the lowest tax rate on new business investment in the G7.
- Fiscal Advantage—Eliminating Canada's total government net debt in less than a generation.
- Entrepreneurial Advantage—Reducing unnecessary regulation and red tape and increasing competition in the Canadian marketplace.
- Knowledge Advantage—Creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world.
- Infrastructure Advantage—Building modern infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public transport through public-private partnerships.

The Web consultation page, which includes links to the *Advantage Canada* document, can be found on the Department of Finance website at http://www.fin.gc.ca/activty/consult_e.html under the heading "Active Consultations." The consultations will end on December 18.

Submissions can be made by e-mail at advantage-avantage@fin.gc.ca or by fax at 613-943-0938. All views submitted as part of this process will be provided to the Minister and held confidential. Only submissions relating directly to the *Advantage Canada* plan will be considered or tabulated.

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To Canadians in every part of this country, I would like to say that I'm looking forward to seeing your ideas on how we can best implement *Advantage Canada*, our new long-term Plan to build a strong economy for Canadians and secure a better quality of life now and for future generations.

As I reported on November 23rd in our government's first *Economic and Fiscal Update*, our economy is doing well and we're exercising real discipline to keep the government's finances balanced.

But we also recognize that the ground rules of the global economy have changed.

We live in a volatile and exciting time, with advances in communications technology, reduced trade barriers and declining transportation costs opening the door to endless possibility and opportunity.

People, jobs and investment are moving across the globe more rapidly than ever before.

And talented, motivated people have become the world's most valuable resource.

Here at home, baby boomers are set to retire in record numbers, testing our capacity to maintain our standard of living.

We're convinced that with the right plan, determination and political will, our country can become a new leader in this fast-changing global economy.

We're also convinced that just as those before us overcame the challenges and barriers standing between them and a better life, we can—and we will—overcome ours.

That's what *Advantage Canada* is all about.

It's about giving Canada and Canadians the key advantages needed to compete today and succeed for years to come.

Our Plan aims to improve our quality of life by building a strong economy that is not only fit for the 21st century, but equipped to lead in the 21st century.

It focuses on creating five key advantages:

A **tax advantage**, by paying down debt and reducing taxes for all Canadians, and establishing the lowest tax rate on new business investment in the G7;

A **fiscal advantage**, by eliminating Canada's total government net debt in less than a generation;

An **entrepreneurial advantage**, by reducing unnecessary regulation and red tape and increasing competition in the Canadian marketplace;

A **knowledge advantage**, by creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world; and

An **infrastructure advantage**, by building modern, world-class infrastructure that ensures a seamless flow of people, goods and services over our roads and bridges and through our ports, gateways and public transit networks.

Advantage Canada is based on four key principles, each of which will act as a prism through which issues will be viewed and policy decisions made not only in the next budget, but for years to come.

These four key principles are:

- Focusing government on what it does best—that means being responsible in its spending, efficient in its operations, effective in its results and accountable to taxpayers;
- Creating new opportunities and choices for people—that means creating incentives for people to excel right here at home. It means reducing taxes and investing in education, training and transition-to-work opportunities so Canadians can achieve their potential and have the choices they want;
- Investing for sustainable growth—that means investing and seeking partnerships with the provinces and the private sector in strategic areas that contribute to strong economies, including primary scientific research, a clean environment and modern infrastructure; and
- Freeing businesses to grow and succeed—that means creating the right economic conditions to encourage firms to invest and flourish.

We propose to implement our Plan through several measures under each of these principles.

We'd like to know if you think we're on the right track with how we propose to implement *Advantage Canada*.

Allow me to highlight a few of those measures.

For example, we propose:

- To eliminate Canada's total government net debt by 2021;
- To give Canadians a direct stake in reducing debt by using the interest savings from federal debt reduction to further reduce personal income taxes—we call this our "Tax Back Guarantee";

- To establish the lowest tax rate on new business investment in the G7;
- To reduce the federal paperwork burden by no less than 20 per cent; and
- To pursue discussions with the provinces to eliminate costly internal trade barriers and build on our leading-edge financial system by establishing a common securities regulator, and to encourage provinces to harmonize sales taxes with the GST.

These are just a few of the steps we propose.

Now I'd like to hear from you, not just on the measures I've highlighted, but also the many other measures we've outlined in the *Advantage Canada* Plan.